



## **Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group**

### **STATEMENT BY THE MINSK GROUP CO-CHAIRS**

Moscow, Washington, Paris, July 3, 2006

Taking into account recent speculation about the basic principles for a peaceful settlement of the NK conflict proposed to both parties by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs, it is necessary to make the following clarification. On June 22 the Minsk Group Co-Chairs reported to the OSCE Permanent Council on the results of the past months of negotiations between the sides on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. They reported on their intensive mediation activities over the past seven months aimed at achieving agreement on the basic principles for a settlement. These included three visits of the Co-Chairs to Baku and Yerevan, three times together and several more times separately, two meetings of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Azerbaijan, and two summits between Presidents Kocharian and Aliyev, first in Rambouillet in February and then in Bucharest in early June. In addition, a joint Mission of Representatives of the Co-Chair countries at the Deputy Foreign Minister level traveled to the region in May. Throughout their mediation efforts, the Co-Chairs stressed, as always, the belief of their nations and of the international community that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can be resolved in no other way than a peaceful one. They also stressed the need for the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to prepare their publics for peace and not for war.

The mediation efforts of the Co-Chairs resulted in the proposal to Presidents Aliyev and Kocharian of a set of fair, balanced, and workable core principles that could pave the way for the two sides to draft a far-reaching settlement agreement. The principles are based on the redeployment of Armenian troops from Azerbaijani territories around Nagorno-Karabakh, with special modalities for Kelbajar and Lachin districts (including a corridor between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh), demilitarization of those territories, and a referendum or population vote -- at a date and in a manner to be decided through further negotiations -- to determine the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Deployment of an international

peacekeeping force and a joint commission for implementation of the agreement would be established, and international assistance would be made available for demining, reconstruction, and resettlement of internally displaced persons in the formerly occupied territories and the war-affected regions of Nagorno-Karabakh. Certain interim arrangements for Nagorno-Karabakh would allow for interaction with providers of international assistance. The sides would renounce the use or threat of use of force, and international and bilateral security guarantees and assurances would be put in place. Regarding the vote to determine the future status of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Co-Chairs stressed that suitable pre-conditions for such a vote would have to be achieved so that the vote would take place in a non-coercive environment in which well-informed citizens have had ample opportunity to consider their positions after a vigorous debate in the public arena.

Unfortunately, at their most recent meeting in Bucharest the Presidents did not reach agreement on these principles. The Co-Chairs continue to believe that the proposals developed through the past two years of negotiations hold the best potential for achieving a just and lasting settlement of the conflict. They strongly believe that it is now time for the two Presidents to take the initiative for achieving a breakthrough in the settlement process based on these principles, and they stand ready to assist the parties to conclude an agreement if the Presidents indicate they are prepared to do so. Although no additional meetings between the sides under the auspices of the Co-Chairs are planned for the immediate future, they will be ready to reengage if the parties decide to pursue the talks with the political will that has thus far been lacking.